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United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

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News Release

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2 plead guilty to transporting women for prostitution

Two men recently pleaded guilty in federal court in connection with transporting illegal immigrants and using them to engage in prostitution throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Craig Kraft, 59, Crystal, pleaded guilty May 12 in Minneapolis to one count of conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States. Kraft entered his plea before U.S. District Court Judge Ann Montgomery. Liqing Liu, 41, St. Paul, pleaded guilty May 9 to a separate count of conspiracy before Judge Montgomery.

According to their respective plea agreements, from April 2007 to December 2007 Kraft conspired with Liu, and in furtherance of that conspiracy Kraft assisted Liu in operating a prostitution business. Specifically, between April 2007 and December 2007, Kraft knowingly transported individuals who had traveled in interstate commerce, knowing that the individuals were engaging in prostitution.

Liu's plea agreement states that from October 2007 to December 2007, he conspired with another to harbor aliens whom Liu knew would engage in prostitution. In furtherance of that conspiracy, Liu rented or leased several residences in which alien women were harbored.

According to an affidavit filed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), investigators learned that individuals had been transporting nationals from various Asian countries into the U.S. for the purpose of engaging in prostitution. The prostitution occurs in both apartments and businesses that advertise as "massage" parlors.

ICE received an anonymous letter on Aug. 8, 2007, outlining the prostitution operation and stating that Chinese women work at the brothel for two to three weeks and then are rotated out of Minnesota. Investigators searched classified advertisements in local newspapers and the Internet advertising for, in and out call "massage" service.

The affidavit alleges that the brothel consistently changed locations, and officers observed

activity consistent with a prostitution business at several Minneapolis residences, motels in Bloomington, Golden Valley, Plymouth and Minneapolis and at an office in St. Louis Park. The affidavit alleges that Liu arranged for the women to come to Minnesota from California, New York and Texas.

Kraft and Liu each face a potential maximum penalty of five years in prison. Judge Montgomery will determine sentencing at a future date.

This case is the result of an investigation by ICE and the police departments of Bloomington, Minneapolis, Plymouth, St. Louis Park and St. Paul, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Erika R. Mozangue.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked annually across international borders for involuntary servitude or use in the sex trades. An estimated 14,500 to 17,500 are trafficked within the U.S. each year. According to the Justice Department, the Twin Cities metropolitan area is one of the 15 largest human trafficking centers in the nation.

ICE is conducting a public service campaign targeting human trafficking. In the last three fiscal years, ICE initiated 958 nationwide investigations into human trafficking organizations that resulted in 520 arrests, 339 criminal indictments and 281 criminal convictions, as well as the seizure of more than \$9 million. If you suspect trafficking activity in your community, call 866-DHS-2ICE.